Expenditure on SC/ST welfare

* 256. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

whether it is a fact that ever since UPA Government assumed power in 2004, the total expenditure on welfare of SCs and STs has not been more than one per cent of the total allocation in any of the past four budgets; and

whether the CAG Report for 2006-07 has revealed that even this parltry allocation for SC/ST welfare is misused, especially in upgrading their educational level, causing widening of the gap in the Gross Drop-out Rate and Gross Enrolment Rate between SC/ST and general caegory students?

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MEIRA KUMAR): (a) and (b) Information is being collected.

Policy for mega power projects

* 257. SHRI KAMALAKHTAR:
SHRI ABU ASIMAZMI:

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

whether it is a fact that Government has formulated a policy for mega power projects, wherein they would be entitled for customs duty exemption on project imports, a 10 year income tax holiday and deemed export status; and

if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SHINDE): (a) and (b) In terms of the existing Mega Power Policy of the Government, operational since 1995, and last modified in April, 2006 fiscal concessions and benefits available to mega power projects are as follows:

1 Zero Customs Duty: In terms of the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Finance (Department of Revenue) No. 21/2002-Customs dated 1st March, 2002 read together with No. 49/2006-Customs dated 26th May, 2006, the import of capital equipment would be free of customs duty for these projects.

2 Deemed Export Benefits: Under Chapter 8 of the Foreign Trade Policy, Deemed Export Benefits are available to domestic bidders for mega power projects, both under public and private sector, on following the stipulations prescribed therein.

3 Income Tax benefits: In addition to the above concessions/benefits, income-tax holiday as per Section 80-IA of the Income Tax Act, 1961 is also available to the mega power projects.

Power plants satisfying the following minimum capacity conditions are eligible for availing the mega power benefits subject to fulfilment of other qualifying requiements in the Mega Power Policy:—

(a) an Inter-state thermal power plant of a capacity of 700 MW or more, located in the States of Jammu and Mashmir, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura; or

an Inter-state thermal power plant of a capacity of 1000 M W or more, located in States other than those specified in clause (a) above; or

an Inter-state hydel power plant of a capacity of 350 MW or more, located in the States of Jammu and Kashmir, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura; or

an Inter-state hydel power plant of a capacity of 500 MW or more, located in States other than those specified in clause (c) above.

Improving Government schools

t*258. SHRI AJAY SINGH CHAUTALA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

whether it is a fact that standard of education in Government schools is not at par with that of private schools;

if so, whether it is also a fact that donation is taken in private schools; and

if so, whether any policy would be formulated for improving Government schools, so that the problem of taking donation by private schools could be checked?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) Education being a concurrent subject, school education primarily comes under the purview of the State Governments. So far as the schools under this Ministry are concerned, there is no evidence to suggest that standard of education is not at par with that of private schools. On the countrary, pass percentages of schools under Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan and Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti, both at class X and Class XII standard, were consistently above the pass percentages of independent private schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) during the last five years (2003-07).

Private schools come under the purview of State Government and it is for the respective State Government to regulate the donations charged by private schools. The Affiliation Bye-laws of Central Board of Secondary Edcuation prohibit charging and collecting of capitation fee or voluntary donations for gaining admission in the schools or for any other purpose. In case of such malpractices, CBSE can take action leading to disaffiliation of the schools.

Improvement of quality of education is a continuous process. Central Government has been implementing Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) at the elementary level since 2001 -02, *inter-alia,* with the objective to focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality. It has also been decided to implement a Centrally sponsored scheme for universalisation of access to and improvement of quality of education at secondary stage during the Eleventh Five Year Plan. These schemes primarily focus on improving access and quality of Government schools.

Wastage of food items

*** 259.** SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is **a** fact that there has been a wastage of perishable food items to the tune of Rs. 50,000 crore every year, due to lack of proper food processing facilities in the country;

t Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.